STORY #2
SECTION 1: Display Type
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SECTION 2: Bylines
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BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA — Every morning, Ada Beatriz Rico (CQ SourceSheet) wakes up very early and eats breakfast with the dead.

She makes herself a mate and sits down to track down the women who were murdered the day before across the country. She dives through reports from colleagues, news agencies, serious newspapers and tabloid portals in search of the information that she will include in her database: name, age, place, weapon, relationship with the aggressor, sons, daughters, previous complaints.

Every once in a while he reads something that hurts him more than usual. She gets up, walks to the balcony, looks at her plants, and tries to clear her head a bit before continuing.

"In the report it is summarized: beaten, stabbed, shot, incinerated, but in the middle is everything that was done to her until she reached that state and we have to read it. It's cruel. Some of our colleagues came in and couldn't continue," says Rico (CQ).

The 68-year-old activist has maintained this routine every day of her life — including Sundays, holidays and vacations — since 2008, when, together with two colleagues, she decided that, since there were no official statistics on femicides, they would be in charge of counting the victims.

Rico is president and co-founder of La Casa del Encuentro, a feminist civil association located in Buenos Aires (CQ Link) that works to prevent, register and eradicate gender-based violence (CQ Rico).

The organization created the country's first femicide observatory (CQ Link+Rico) in 2009 and promoted laws that have increased penalties for femicides, promote the prevention of gender-based violence, and ensure child support for victims (CQ Link). It also provides free counseling and support to people who have

experienced gender-based violence and human trafficking (CQ Link).

On November 25, 2008, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, recalls Rico (CQ). Producing it was an artisanal and exhausting task: she reviewed, alone, 40 media outlets a day.

Despite the effort, the document had its shortcomings. Shortly after the launch, the family of Adriana Marisel "Lili" Zambrano, a woman murdered by her ex-partner months earlier in Palpalá, a town in the province of Jujuy (CQLink+Link), in the north of the country, came to the association, asking that her name be added to the report.

At the beginning of 2009, the association presented its first annual report, compiling all the cases from 2008. The document was widely circulated in the press and faced with an important decision: leave the investigation there or continue with the surveys.

Rico (CQ) was sewing a flag to call for justice for Zambrano when he made the decision. "I looked at Lili's picture and I felt like she looked at me. It was tremendous. That's when I said, 'I'm going to do it for you,'" recalls Rico (CQ). "That same night I decided we were going to have the observatory."

From there, they continued to improve the system. They currently register all the murders of women that appear in the press and are following up to determine if it was a femicide.

"My idea, how naïve I was," says Rico(CQ) with a smile, "was that there should be official statistics, because this is a very complex job, it is the responsibility of the state, not of civil society. But you can't, because they always have a lot less."

The activist explains that each year the observatory registers between 50 and 60 more femicides than the official statistics of the Supreme Court of Justice of the Nation (CQ Link). Rico says there is a lack of a "gender perspective in the justice system."

The spotlight also emerged as a response to a societal demand. "Relatives would come and women would come [asking] to be taken care of and we didn't have a team," says Rico (CQ).

A fellow social worker suggested that she ask for volunteers. Rico (CQ) listened to her and in 2010 they opened the doors of the Center for Assistance, Guidance and Comprehensive Prevention on Sexist Violence and Human Trafficking of the Civil Association La Casa del Encuentro (CQ Link).

The center works thanks to the contribution of about 30 psychologists, social workers and volunteer lawyers (CQ Rico) who team up to accompany, advise and support people in situations of gender violence.

"It changed my vision of the race. Now I work from the perspective of gender and feminism," says Daniela Moringo (CQSourcesheet), psychologist and volunteer (CQ Link), about her experience with the association. "I haven't found the grouping and belonging that exists in the little house in other feminist spaces."

Florencia Copparoni (CQ Sourcesheet), a lawyer and volunteer for the organization (CQ Link), adds that grouping is also key to improving care and mutual support.

Both highlight Rico's (CQ) commitment to the cause. "It's in all the marches, in all the meetings. It's their life," says Moringo (CQ).

"The emergency phone is your cell phone," concludes Copparoni (CQ).

Rico (CQ) says she is very proud of all the volunteers who come through the association and hopes they can continue their work when she is gone.

"I still plan to bother me a lot, but I would love for La Casa del Encuentro to continue because it is a project beyond those of us who founded it," he concludes.